



FRIENDS OF CONNECTICUT STATE PARKS, INC.
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March 11, 2015

Testimony RB 1061 - AAC the Fiscal Sustainability of State Parks

Dear Environment Committee Members,

My name is Pamela Adams and, I serve as the President of the Friends of CT State Parks (FCSP), I am writing to support Raised Bill # 1061. I applaud the innovative recommendations in this bill to create new revenue sources to supplement Connecticut's beloved State Parks. This is a very good first step to moving the State Parks to a more financial stable position.

Adding a State Park donation onto the Motor Vehicle Registration of each passenger vehicle and motorcycle with an opt-out provision has proven successful in at least six states and would serve as a significant supplement to the State Parks Budget. While I do not normally advocate paying higher fees, in this instance, I would like to suggest that the donation be increased from \$5 to a higher amount to support the fiscal viability of the state park system. Additionally, in Section 5(2) I would suggest adding the word "only" between *to provide* and *for* to insure that the funds are utilized for park purposes.

Returning revenues generated by State Parks Concessions directly to the State Parks while still supporting the Dept. of Rehabilitation Services is would also be of considerable help to the Park system. This is very closely aligned to how the State Parks operated with the Concessionaires prior to BESB expanding its operations at state-owned facilities. The loss of this revenue to the parks, contributed to the decline of resources available to the parks to maintain facilities and support programs. Concession fees directed back to the parks is a positive recommendation. In keeping with the intent of this bill, I would like to recommend that the park revenues described in this section be directed to the Sustainability Account rather than the General Fund.

Private Sponsorship or Adopt-A-Park is another recommendation that has proven successful in other State Park systems. I would caution that historically, there has been a perception there should be very specific guidelines in place as to the types of sponsors that may participate and, the size and number of signs acknowledging the sponsor in order to protect the integrity and mission of the parks.

The most critical aspect to the success of this bill is to insure that the State Parks Sustainability Account, a non-lapsing, dedicated account within the General Fund, be shielded to the greatest extent possible from being swept at a future date. This has happened to dedicated State Park accounts in the past,

eliminating financial gains made through new fees or innovative park programs. This may be a challenge within the confines of established fiscal management practices. All of the positive recommendations in Bill1061 will be for naught if accruing funds can be taken for other purposes outside of the State Parks system. Please do all that is possible to insure that the State Parks Sustainability Account remain as a dedicated, dependable revenue source for the future of Connecticut's State Parks.

Thank you for raising this Bill.

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